

CORVALLIS

IN 1900

by

Minerva Kiger Reynolds

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[1976]

INTRODUCTION

When I first thought of writing this story I only intended to describe Corvallis and the way people lived there in 1900 as I remembered.

However, I now believe that a brief review of the history of the town from the time it was founded up to 1900 would make the story much clearer. While I remember Corvallis as it was in 1900 as clearly as if I had lived there only a few years ago, I was only an eight-year-old child and certainly not beyond making mistakes, especially in the exact time that events happened. Please bear with me.

HISTORY OF CORVALLIS BEFORE 1900

Joseph C. Avery arrived in the Willamette Valley in 1846. He staked out a claim of 640 acres along Mary's River and built a small log cabin on a little knoll just west of the present north approach to Mary's River bridge.

Then he made a trip to California but soon returned to his claim and built a large one-room cabin to replace the small one. Mrs. Avery joined him there at that time.

Wm. Dixon also arrived in the Willamette Valley in 1846 and staked a claim of 640 acres joining Avery's claim on the north. He built a log cabin there. Mrs. Dixon was the first white woman in the Valley.

Avery mapped off ten or twelve acres of his claim and in 1851 founded the town of Marysville. He opened a little store in a small building that he had used for a granary. Settlers were coming in rapidly.

About that time Dixon founded the town of Orleans on the east side of the Willamette River almost opposite Marysville.

Gold was discovered in California in 1849 and the great "gold rush" began. People hurried there to make a fortune. It was about 2,000 miles from Missouri to the Willamette Valley and required six months to make the trip.

When the white people moved into America on the East Coast, the native Indians were gradually pushed westward. Now they resented the invasion of the West. They attacked the wagon trains, brutally massacred the settlers and burned their wagons. Still they came on and on in ever increasing numbers.

There was gold in "them thar hills" all right, but mining it involved many dangers and hardships. Some did "strike it rich," but more lost what little gold they possessed seeking it. Many felt they could make more gold from what they could raise in this fertile land than they could dig out of the hills. So they took up claims, cleared land, and put in crops.

Settlers kept coming in rapidly. Avery's little store was far too small, so he build a larger one on the southwest corner of Second and Washington Streets.

There had been a dispute concerning the boundary between the American and British settlers. Marcus Whitman was instrumental in bringing a thousand new homesteaders into the Willamette Valley at that time. The dispute was settled by vote, and this big influx of American settlers gave the Americans a large majority.

Benton County was created in 1847. It extended from the northern boundary to California on the south, and from the Willamette River on the east to the Pacific Ocean on the west.

In 1850, St. Clair and Moore built and operated a ferry on which to cross the Willamette River. Earlier the only means of crossing was by canoe, so this was a great help to everyone. It crossed the river about where the Van Buren Street bridge is now located. Before long a bridge was built across Mary's River.

Both towns made rapid growth and soon Avery's second store was far outgrown. In 1852 St. Clair built the town's first real store on the southwest corner of Second and Washington Streets where Avery's store had stood. Main Street actually began at this corner and built northward, because a block to the south the land dropped to a lower level and frequently overflowed through the winter.

In 1852 Avery replaced his log cabin with a frame house on the same site.

Also in 1852 the first steamboat came up the Willamette River to Marysville. This was the beginning of a heavy river traffic.

In 1853 the name of Marysville was changed to "Corvallis", meaning "the Heart of the Valley." This was due to the fact that there was already a town in California by the name of Marysville. This might cause confusion.

In 1855 the capitol of Oregon was moved to Corvallis. The Territorial University was also located

there. The citizens were elated as it meant much to the town. A capitol building was erected at the northwest corner of Second and Adams Streets, facing east.

That same year the Legislature met and moved the capitol back to Salem, which was a great set-back to Corvallis. Soon, however, the Legislature placed the Agricultural College in Corvallis and that compensated for their loss. A building was erected for it near the northwest corner of Fifth and Madison Streets.

Corvallis was incorporated in 1857 and in 1859 Oregon was admitted to the Union, becoming the thirty-third state. Joseph Lane became Oregon's first governor and the first property tax was levied in 1858.

A boat dock was built on the bank of the Willamette near the east end of Jackson Street. Later the Benton Grist Mills were built just south of the dock and boats loaded grain there.

Settlers were moving in so fast that Avery and Dixon realized they would have to make room for a great influx of citizens, so they each tendered forty acres of their claims to the town, the dividing line being near Monroe Street. Dixon also set aside a block of his land to be used for a Court House. In 1888, the present Court House was erected there.

In 1861 the greatest flood ever known in the Willamette Valley occurred. With the flood threatening the town of Orleans, the inhabitants moved over to Corvallis. The town was washed completely away. Since Corvallis was on higher ground, it was not damaged greatly by the flood waters.

This flood is known as the "Flood of 1861 and '62" because torrential rains began just before Christmas in 1861 and continued until just before New Year's Day. The Willamette rose to a great height; then the rain subsided and it was expected that the river would commence falling. But instead, the rain began again, the river started to rise again and continued to rise to unknown heights. Practically the whole valley was under water--only the highest areas protruded.

My father, R. C. Kiger, was running a livery stable in Corvallis at that time. He crossed the Willamette River in a row boat and rescued some people who were stranded in a tree. When he returned he landed the boat at the southeast corner of Second and Van Buren Streets, the present site of the Buick garage.

With the increased population, Corvallis built up rapidly and Main Street extended for several blocks. The Friendly Sawmill was located at the north end of Second Street. Lumber was plentiful and cheap, so they used only the best in building, which meant that the buildings were good both in construction and architecture for that time. This is shown by the fact that some are still in use and many more were being used in recent years until they were razed to make parking space. There was one man who built with brick and became known as "Brick" Fisher. There was a brickyard just south of Mary's River in early days. The bricks were "sun-baked." The first building that "Brick" Fisher built was at the southwest corner of Second and Monroe Streets and a portion of it is still in use.

While they built good buildings, they paid little attention to streets and sidewalks. There were no sewers and shallow, open ditches were the only means of drainage. These could not carry away the water that fell in the heavy rains and the streets remained wet and muddy throughout the winter. Sidewalks were built of wood; there were blocks or a few planks or some large rocks at street crossings.

In 1869 a terrible fire occurred. It consumed an entire block in the best business district, beginning on the north side of Madison, between Second and Third Streets and swept the whole block. It probably would have burned most of the town had it not been for the Fisher Building which was fireproof because of its brick structure. The wide wet street also helped in checking the blaze. Although there were volunteer firemen and a wide river flowed at the edge of town,

there was no fire-fighting equipment, so the men were powerless to check fires.

The citizens became desperate and determined to acquire some means for controlling the many fires that occurred. So they bought a large fire engine in San Francisco. They called it "The Big Six" and hoped it would give them the protection they needed so badly. It was a beautiful thing but far too heavy to use on the slushy streets, and they found they were unable to reach a fire in time to control it. So they sold "The Big Six" for scrap metal.

In the meantime fires and floods continued to plague them. A brewery on the river bank burned and in 1870 my father lost his livery stable in a fire. A few years later Wells' Warehouse and a flour mill were destroyed by fire. It seemed that the settlers in the Willamette Valley were having more than their share of disasters, but there were at least two things which they never lost-- first, their faith in the country, and second, their determination to succeed.

In 1873 there was another dreadful fire, even more terrifying than the first. The "City Hotel," which stood on the southwest corner of Second and Madison Streets, burned. The fire began in the middle of the night when everyone was asleep. The entire upper story was ablaze before it was discovered. The occupants of the hotel escaped in their night clothes by jumping, by sliding down sheets together, or poles. One man, John Murray, was burned to death.

The "Hamilton and Job Bank" was then built on the corner where the hotel had stood.

In 1876 the "Groves' Water Plant" was constructed at the northwest corner of First and Adams Streets. It had a tower 80 feet high and a tank that held 100,000 gallons of water. The water was taken directly from the Willamette River, the intake being on the river bank near Shaesgreen's Planing Mill, which was two blocks north of the Plant. Though the water was not sterilized or treated in any way, it was piped to residences

throughout the town and fire hydrants were installed. A hose-cart was purchased and it was drawn by a team of young firemen, who would attach the hose to a fire hydrant and were usually able to extinguish a fire before it was out of control. This was the town's first efficient means of fire protection.

Homesteaders came in ever increasing numbers. The fertile valley yielded heavy crops. So much grain was produced, the boats were unable to handle it. What warehouses they had were overflowing. Furthermore, the settlers needed to sell their grain in order to have money to operate. People soon realized the need of a railroad. A railroad to Yaquina Bay, a distance of 70 miles, would give them an opportunity to transfer their grain to sea-going vessels bound for San Francisco or other good markets at a reasonable cost.

A committee organized themselves into what they called "The Willamette Valley and Coast Railroad Company," and attempted to persuade the legislature to build a railroad. Although they favored it, there was no money for such a project.

The citizens were willing to invest what little money they had in it, but that was only a drop in the bucket compared to what it would require to build the railroad. Many who had no money to invest offered to donate time, and farmers offered to work with their teams.

The need and desire for a railroad continued to grow. The Company figured that if they could get 10 or 12 miles of a road-bed built, they might be able to sell bonds, or in some other way raise enough money to continue. Again the "W. V. C. Co." appealed to the legislature for help. Now they agreed to give them a franchise and a right-of-way for the railroad on county land.

Success looked doubtful but the W. V. C. Co. decided to try it. They would work where they could without money and skip places where expenditures were necessary.

At last they started work 10 or 12 miles west of Corvallis. Many came to work, some with teams and wagons, others with picks and shovels and axes. Work progressed surprisingly fast. Interest increased and more and more men came to help.

It was at about this time that Col. T. E. Hogg came West. In San Francisco he heard that a railroad was being built in the Willamette Valley without funds. That brought a smile to his face--here was something he just had to see. He made the trip to the Valley in 1871 and was greatly impressed with this fertile land. The smile left his face and he became very serious. This was a great project and a railroad would be a very profitable investment. He made a trip to Yaquina Bay to study the area. This, he figured, would become a large shipping port when the Willamette Valley came into full production.

He had a banker friend in San Francisco who he was quite sure would help him raise money to finance building the railroad. Right then he made a great decision--he would build this road!

He consulted the banker friend -- he was enthusiastic! They organized the "Oregon Pacific Railroad Co." and bought out the W. V. C. Co.

The citizens of Corvallis were more than delighted. Just as they had figured something had happened that assured them that the railroad would become a reality.

Members of the O. P. R. R. Co. and those associated with the construction of the road, moved to Corvallis with their families. These were people of means and influence. They entered into the social life of the town; some even opened business establishments. They entertained lavishly and many gay parties were given.

Col. Hogg lived in the Clark house on College Hill and it was known as "The Hogg House." In later years, when Waldo Hall was built on that site, it was moved down Jefferson Street and made into the Austin Apartments.

Wallis Nash, who was active in the construction of the railroad, was an English lawyer who came from England with his family to Portland in 1879. From there he came up the Willamette to Corvallis by river boat. Until he could get a house built, the family lived in the Vincent house.

Col. Hogg raised fifteen million dollars with which to build the railroad to Yaquina. The most of the money came from the East and from England.

Since there was no machinery available at that time for heavy construction, the road was built by hand with picks, shovels, and axes. For this work many Chinese were brought from China.

My father, R. C. Kiger, was the first man to have driven a team and wagon from Corvallis to Yaquina in earlier days, there being little more than a horse trail then and still rugged. Col. Hogg had to first make improvements on the road, beginning where the W. V. and C. Co. had left off. This was necessary in order to transport men and supplies, for some of the men lived in camps along the route.

Once organized, work progressed rapidly until winter came and bad weather hampered the work. Suddenly a terrible storm struck with a heavy snowfall that reached a depth of two-and-a-half feet in the hills. The whole area was paralyzed. The Chinese, unused to anything like it, absolutely refused to leave camp. It was estimated that there were two thousand people, including the workmen and those living in the vicinity, who were without food and facing starvation.

Col. Hogg fought his way back, on foot, to the small village of Philomath for help, a distance of 20 miles. From there and from Corvallis they obtained men to haul food and supplies on sleds to the stranded people.

The snow remained for weeks and was followed by heavy rains and flooding that washed out many fills and bridges. Although Col. Hogg was given an extension of time to complete the railroad, he was obliged to bring in more Chinese in order to finish it on time.

It is claimed that he had a thousand Chinese working at one time before it was finished.

With great effort, the road was completed from Corvallis to Yaquina on schedule in 1886, and the first passenger train ran from Corvallis to Albany, January 6, 1887.

The delay and trouble that the bad weather had caused was very discouraging indeed, but it was only the beginning of what was to follow.

Blow after blow struck.

First it was discovered that the entrance to Yaquina Bay was not deep enough to allow sea-going vessels to enter. Later, however, the Government appropriated money with which to deepen it.

Secondly, Col. Hogg had intended to build this railroad into Idaho where it would connect with a railroad to the East, but he was able to build only about thirty miles beyond Albany.

Many river boats were operating on the Willamette River now, and were carrying the most of the freight, leaving little business for the trains. The coastal country was sparsely settled, so the railroad obtained very little business there. Corvallis, however, had made a great growth and the railroad could be given credit for the most of it.

The citizens of Corvallis purchased a farm of 35 acres one mile west of the town and donated it for a site for the Oregon Agricultural College. In 1888 the Administration Building was erected there and in 1892 the college was moved to the hill. William Finlay was its first president.

In 1888 the present Courthouse was built on the block which Mr. Dixon had donated for that purpose. It was heated with wood stoves and the clock on the tower was operated by means of weights until electricity was made available. A jail, 35 feet square, was built near the south side of the building and a watering trough and long rows of hitching rails on the northside along Jackson Street, so people might water and tie their horses while in town.

The Central School was built in 1889 on the block between Madison and Monroe and Seventh and Eighth Streets. It was the only school in Corvallis and all eight grades of the public school and the ninth grade were taught there.

The City Hall was erected in 1890 on the southeast corner of Fourth and Madison Streets facing north. The first real volunteer fire department had been organized in 1888 and it was now housed on the ground floor of this building. A lovely ballroom occupied almost all of the second floor.

In 1890 a horse-car was installed. It met trains and carried passengers to the hotel. It ran on a track and was pulled by a horse. It ran from the Occidental Hotel at Second and Madison, south on Second to Adams, west on Adams to Seventh, from there south to the Southern Pacific Depot, on Seventh and A, then to the C & E Depot at Ninth and Washington. It was later extended up Monroe Street to Job's Addition, making it two and one-fourth miles in length. Tickets, in lots of 50, sold for three cents each for adults and one cent for school children. The car was kept at the corner of First and Monroe Streets and the horse at the livery stable in the middle of that block.

In 1892 the Carriage Factory on Thirteenth and A Streets was built and an Ice Factory at Third and Western Avenue. Bonds were voted to construct sewers and ten blocks of pavement on Main Street.

With so many new public buildings in the town and on College Hill, the future of Corvallis looked very bright, but this was not to continue. In 1890 a financial panic struck the country and it became world-wide. The awful depression that followed hit the Willamette Valley in 1893. It paralyzed the entire country. The O.P.R.R.Co. went bankrupt and the Hamilton and Job Bank closed its doors. Within the next three years the Yaquina Railroad that cost fifteen million dollars, sold three times at Sheriff sales for less than \$100,000. The stockholders refused to accept such losses and big lawsuits followed. Foreign countries flooded the market with cheap products;

the bottom of prices for farm products dropped out. Wheat sold for 24 cents a bushel, oats for 10 cents, cattle for 3 cents a pound, hogs for 1-1/2 cents a pound, and sheep for 50 cents a head. Farm labor was very cheap but American farmers could not compete with the cheap cost of production in foreign countries. However, the party in power believed in free trade.

In 1896 William McKinley was elected President of the United States. He imposed a high tariff on imports at once. This stopped the influx of cheap foreign trade into the country and prices began to improve. With better prices, business also became better.

Recovery from such a crisis was naturally slow but gradually the country began to pull out and by 1900 a period of prosperity began.

CORVALLIS IN 1900

Corvallis was a peaceful little town in 1900, with a population of about eighteen hundred. People had struggled through the depression, living almost entirely upon what they raised. They had learned to be thrifty and although by 1900 times were better and the future looked bright, they continued to be so.

While there were some well-to-do people with nice homes in Corvallis, the majority were in meager circumstances. Most of them, however, owned a little home of some kind. Many men were able to do a little plain carpentry work and took pride in making additions to their homes, such as an additional room, some cupboards, or perhaps a fireplace. Neighbors often came to help.

There were from one to several barns on every block throughout the residential district. Many people kept a horse as a means of transportation, or a cow to furnish milk, cream, and butter for the family and perhaps have a few quarts of milk to sell to neighbors. Milk sold for five cents a quart and was delivered in five pound lard pails with lids. Cows were staked on vacant lots or on Mary's River Flat during the summer. Some people also kept a few chickens and they scratched as hard as the people did to live. Although people worked hard and long hours, they enjoyed life just the same.

Families were very close--they loved each other and their home regardless of how humble it might be. They enjoyed being together there.

They also liked their neighbors. They visited back and forth and were always anxious to lend a helping hand to each other.

The stores remained open until nine o'clock at night. Many men in the community enjoyed going down town after their evening meal to learn of the day's happenings.

Since hardware stores and barber shops were men's stores, those were where they congregated.

Jess Spencer's Barber Shop was a particularly favorite meeting place. They gathered around the large wood stove in the back of the store and learned the news, told jokes, and spit tobacco juice into the big brass spittoons that were kept there.

At nine o'clock the curfew rang and children under age hurried home. Parents observed it too because they wanted to be at home with their children.

That was the end of the day. The stores closed and the proprietors went home. People were tired and before long the coal oil lamps began to be extinguished, the town was dark, and everyone was fast asleep.

At dawn the roosters heralded the break of day with their concern, and again the flames of the coal oil lamps began to blossom in the windows and columns of blue smoke rose from the chimney tops. The town was awake and bustling--there was work to be done. Horses must be fed, cows milked, and milk delivered, breakfast prepared and lunches packed. Children walked to school. Wages were a dollar a day with board and room or a dollar fifty if they boarded themselves. Housework was \$2.50 a week with board and room.

Housewives organized their work systematically, having a day for every task. Monday was washday. At that time there were a few crude washing machines on the market. They were operated by means of gears, operated by hand. Most women, however, preferred their tubs, wash-boards, and hand wringers.

Hot water coils in the firebox of the cook-stove and a hot water tank were replacing the water tank that hung on the end of the stove and required filling and emptying by hand.

While clothes were boiled on the stove in a large boiler, then lifted into a bucket by means of a clothes-stick, rinsed in a tub of water, blued and some starched, and finally carried in a basket to the yard where they were pinned on lines with wooden clothes pins.

Tuesday was ironing day. Flat irons with detachable handles were replacing the old irons which were welded in one piece and required a cloth pad to hold the

hot handle. The irons were heated on the top of the stove and as one iron cooled it was returned to the stove and exchanged for a hot one.

On Wednesday they mended, darned and did odd jobs about the house.

Thursday was visiting day. The ladies dressed in their best attire and made formal calls upon their lady friends. If the friend called upon was not at home, a calling card was slipped under the front door and she moved on to another friend. When the absent lady returned home, she rushed to the door to see whether she'd had any callers. If she found cards she placed them on a silver tray or some other lovely dish on the parlor table. Callers did not call again until their calls had been returned.

Friday the house was cleaned and on Saturday baking was done for Sunday.

On Sunday morning the church bells rang, calling people to church. They sounded very sacred and were something never to be forgotten. Most people attended church and the children went to Sunday School.

After church people either entertained guests for dinner or were, in turn, invited out themselves. The ministers and their families were always Sunday dinner guests at the home of some member of their church. On nice Sunday afternoons many went for walks or, if they had horses, for drives into the country. A favorite walk was along the Willamette River, on First Street, or up Third Street to Mary's River Bridge. Teenage boys sometimes raced their horses on straight stretches of county roads, one of which was four miles south of Corvallis on the road to Monroe about east of the present airport. The other was three miles north of town at Fairplay on the Albany road.

There were nine churches in Corvallis, eight of which were in an area of about three blocks square. The Catholic Church stood on the northwest corner of Fourth and Adams and the Presbyterian, near the end of that block at Fourth and Jefferson. The Baptist

Church was near the corner of Fifth and Jefferson, facing Fifth Street. The Congregational was on the northwest corner of Third and Jefferson, the North Methodist at Fourth and Madison, the South Methodist at Fifth and Madison, and the Christian on the southwest corner of Sixth and Madison. It is the only one of these churches still in the location it was at the beginning of the century.

The Episcopal Church was on the southeast corner of Seventh and Jefferson, while the Evangelical was on Eleventh and Monroe.

Because the ministers' salaries were so low, the women of the congregations worked continually to help. They sewed, held teas, and did quilting in order to raise a little money to help out. During the summer they held ice cream socials where they sold generous servings of home made ice cream and cake for fifteen cents. Once a month they met at the minister's home with gifts of food such as fruit, vegetables, cream or butter, and eggs. There were members in the congregations who lived on less than the ministers, yet they always found something which they could donate.

Housewives of that era were very economical, nothing was wasted. Out-grown clothing was handed down to smaller children or made over. Garments no longer usable were cut into strips, the ends sewn together, then wound into balls. A lady in town with a hand loom wove these into rugs or carpets. They were both attractive and serviceable and were used in many homes. With a padding of straw, the carpets were laid down, wall-to-wall, then tacked to the floor near the baseboard.

Twice a year, in the spring and in the fall, there was a general house-cleaning. Anyone who ever assisted in that task never forgot it and would certainly appreciate modern appliances.

At that time carpets were taken up, made into a roll, taken outdoors, and unrolled over a clothesline or a rope stretched between two trees. Then they were beaten with a carpet-beater. This was made of

heavy wire, was about three feet long, and resembled a fly swatter. When thoroughly dusted, the carpet was returned to the house where, in the meantime, the old straw had been removed, the floor thoroughly cleaned, and a new layer of straw spread upon it. Then the carpet was carefully unrolled over the straw, tacked down and the quarter round replaced. Until the straw settled, it was like walking on inflated rubber.

Next were the curtains. Most of these were white lace and hung from poles which were either walnut or white, by means of brass rings. At house-cleaning time the curtains were washed, boiled, blued and starched. While still damp they were pinned into a curtain frame to dry. Each frame held a pair of curtains and they dried in a few hours. They were then removed and hung back at the windows which had been washed sparkling clean. Washing all of the curtains was quite a task but when they were finished, they hung crisp and lovely.

In spite of the work, housewives usually went about it humming a tune, and were proud of the finished results.

Although everybody worked hard, time was taken out for pleasure. They gave parties, held dances, and had social gatherings. Since no one had much money to spend for social affairs, all joined in, and contributed their share, so actually they were of no great expense to anyone.

Bicycle riding was very popular in those days. Bicycle clubs were formed in Corvallis and in neighboring towns. The Corvallis and Albany Clubs built a bicycle path between the two towns. It was located on the west side of what is now Highway 20. It was a big improvement over the rough, muddy, or dusty wagon road of that time. Bicycle riders of today would have pronounced it very rough riding. There were many tandems in use. "A Bicycle Built for Two" was the most popular song of the day.

People particularly enjoyed picnics and celebrations and went all out on such occasions.

The thing that was most disturbing in those days was liquor. There were three saloons in the town and some men patronized them far too much. These were mostly the unmarried men. Usually, after they married, and had families to support, they didn't have money for liquor and drank much less, or stopped drinking entirely. But there were some who never quit. The officers knew the drinkers and watched them closely. Some loud talking, occasionally a fist fight, and rarely a little gun play was about the extent of a disturbance they caused the community but their families suffered from their drinking.

There was very little work for people in the town. Strong's sawmill, formerly Friendly's, on north Second Street; Fischer's Flour Mill, south of Mary's River; and Shaesgreen's Planing Mill on First Street -- each employed a few workmen.

There was only one grade school in town, the Central School between Seventh and Eighth Streets and Madison and Monroe. Seven grades were taught there, the first grade being taught in an unused church on the southwest corner of Fourth and Monroe.

Since the ninth grade was the only high school at that time, it was also in the Central School building. Enrollment was small at the college so not many positions were available there.

As a rule, merchants operated their own stores, perhaps hiring an extra clerk or a bookkeeper.

Buggies, carriages, wagon and other horse-drawn vehicles were manufactured in the East and shipped to Corvallis. These were made of oak and since there was much oak in Benton County, the citizens, realizing the town needed more industries to provide work for the men, decided to build a carriage factory. They believed it would also prove to be a good investment. Many people bought stock in it and in 1892 a large factory was erected on Thirteenth and A Streets.

To their great disappointment, they found that western oak was very different from that grown in the East. They were unable to cure it. It cracked and checked even after it was made into vehicles. Furthermore, the

hardware men selling such vehicles, had made long contracts with Eastern firms and could not purchase from the local factory. Thus the factory proved to be a complete failure. It stood idle for years. In 1901 the machinery was sold to an Albany company which manufactured organs and the building was partially torn down, one section being transformed into the building that now houses the Corvallis Feed and Seed Company.

In the summertime farmers brought produce into town to sell to the housewives. They drove up and down the residential district ringing a bell, and women rushed out to buy. It was mostly fruit and vegetables that they had to sell, but sometimes they brought meat, usually pork. Strawberries were six boxes for a quarter. A large pan of meaty backbones also sold for a quarter.

Every fall a little old lady came in from Linn County with a wagonload of pumpkins. She drove up and down the streets, ringing her bell. When she sighted a housewife she would call, "Punkins, punkins, any punkins today, Missus?"

And then there was "Horse-radish Billy," as he was called, who raised horseradish and prepared it for market. He built a little two-wheeled cart on which he placed a five-gallon stone crock of horseradish and wheeled it from house to house. If they didn't buy, Billy gave them enough for their dinner.

Wood was the only heating fuel. Many farmers were clearing land and had wood for sale. It was delivered on a wood rack drawn by a team of horses. A cord, 4 x 4 x 8 feet, was a wagon load selling for \$2.50 a cord for fir or \$3.50 for oak. It was piled in the street as near the woodshed as possible, then sawed into stove-wood lengths by a gasoline saw for fifty cents a cord.

Teenage boys and men hurried to obtain the job of putting the wood into the woodshed. It was hauled in a wheelbarrow and piled in the shed for fifty cents a cord.

While there was little work to be had in the town, there was considerable work on the farms that surrounded the town.

Hop raising had become quite an industry in the

Willamette Valley and there were a number of yards near Corvallis that afforded many men employment for a large part of the year. In the fall it seemed as if nearly everyone picked hops. In fact it was the only vacation that many people had.

The hop yard owners provided camping grounds for their pickers. They also ran a daily wagon to transport pickers who did not wish to camp.

The standard wage for hop-picking was one cent a pound. A basketful, called a box, weighed fifty pounds. Upon filling a basket, the picker called "Box full!" and the yard tender emptied them into a large burlap sack, weighed them, and gave the picker a slip showing the number of pounds.

Women averaged three or four boxes a day, the men, five or six, and children might pick one or two. So a family might earn six or seven dollars in a day and those were good wages in those days. Many people depended on earning enough to outfit their children for school, purchase something needful for the home, or have money for Christmas.

The town of Independence was known as the hop center of the world. There were more and larger yards in that vicinity and a good many Corvallis people who had their own transportation, picked hops there because of a longer picking season. The Krebs and the McLaughlin yards were two of the largest yards there.

When I went downtown window shopping, I usually walked down the west side of Second Street, which was Main Street. When I reached Monroe I crossed the street and returned on the east side. Children of today would no doubt have found very little to interest them there, but I always found the trip quite worthwhile.

First in the block between Adams and Jefferson Streets was Mrs. Gould's Millinery Shop, and I would stop and admire the lovely display of hats that Ella Johnson had made.

Next was Jake Bloomberg's Junk Shop. He drove

a team and wagon about the county collecting junk. As he approached a farmhouse he would chant, "Any rags, any bags, any bottles today? The junk-man is coming your way." He would buy anything you didn't want. He paid very little for it and sold it for little more. He took what he collected into his shop and piled the things of a kind together. If you needed a part to make a repair, you could find it at Jake's if you looked long enough. I was allowed to go in there only when Mother did. While she searched, I rummaged, and came out covered with dust, rust, and grime, but clutching some treasure I had found. It might be a pretty vase or dish, a picture or a book. When Mother asked the price, Jake usually said, "Ten cents."

To most people Jake's was just a dirty old junk shop, but to me it was a house of treasures, and I am sure that antique collectors of today would have agreed with me.

The drygoods store of J. H. Harris joined Jake's on the north. The front door was recessed a few feet and Mr. Harris often stood there with a cheery greeting for those who passed. One day a professor from the college passed.

"Good morning, Professor," said the merchant, and glancing down at the professor's well-worn shoes, he added, "Better come in and let me sell you a new pair of shoes."

Whereupon the Professor replied, "When I want a new pair of shoes, I'll buy them" and never slackened his pace.

On the southeast corner of Second and Jefferson Streets was E. B. Horning's Grocery Store and that was where I usually stopped to do my trading. Mr. Horning would greet me with a big smile and ask, "Well, Toodles (my nickname which everyone called me), what will you have today?" I would give him my nickel, he would fill the little striped sack well up with candy, and I would proceed on my way.

Near the middle of the next block was a long flight of stairs that led up to Dr. Emmett Taylor's dental

office. The only time I ever ascended those stairs was when Mother dragged me up to the dentist's office.

It seems that it was even more difficult to get my brothers up there. I recall them telling me of the time when my brother, John, needed some dental work done. The folks were living on the farm and father stopped his work and hitched a team to the hack to take him to the dentist. Mother and Father rode in the front seat, the two boys in the back. Father stopped at the foot of the stairs to let Mother and John out. As Mother turned to get out of the back she asked in surprise, "Why, where is John?"

"Oh, he got out at Dixon Creek," replied Dick. John had quietly climbed over the back of the seat and dropped out of the hack without being noticed by his parents.

Pratt's Jewelry Store was in this block and I always enjoyed looking at the beautiful display of jewelry in their window.

Next to that was Hall's Bakery where a large unwrapped unsliced load of bread sold for five cents or six loaves for a quarter. Doughnuts, cinnamon rolls, or cookies were a dime a dozen. A generous square of frosted cake also sold for a dime.

On the corner of Second and Madison stood the Bullis popcorn wagon, and if I had another nickel, I bought a sack of that fragrant corn.

In the middle of the next block, between Madison and Monroe, was Small's Bakery. If you ordered an ice cream soda, Mr. Small would place a glass in a metal frame having a handle, then drop a scoop of ice cream into the glass and with his hand on the faucet of the fountain, would ask, "What flavor, please?" as he spat tobacco juice across the glass into a big brass spittoon that sat nearby.

Next door was Cameron's Harness Shop. They had a life-size, dappled gray, wooden horse on display in the store. I was a horse lover and that was the biggest attraction for me on Main Street. I would walk the length of the street just to see what he was wearing that

day. Some days he was saddled and bridled, with lovely rosettes on the bridle and a gay saddle blanket on his back. He might have a work harness on, with a big padded collar, or a driving harness trimmed with brass buckles and snaps. Occasionally he wore a fly-net trimmed with tassels. At any rate, I thought he was beautiful and so were his trappings. After admiring him for a few minutes, I would cross Second Street and return on the East side.

Skipton's Livery Stable occupied most of the block between Monroe and Madison. Many times I would see the "horse-car" stop at the Occidental Hotel on the corner of Second and Madison, to discharge the passengers it had brought from the depot.

In the middle of that same block was another long flight of stairs leading to the second floor. In 1890 when the Gazette Times office was moved across the street to its new location above Graham and Wortham's Drug Store, a cable broke as they were taking the heavy press up these stairs, and John Huffman, the editor, was killed.

Next to this stairway was the local post office. There was no mail delivery at that time. You called for your mail at the window or rented a box. I always called for our mail on these trips.

Miles Starr's Candy Kitchen came next. On the days that Miles made taffy, many school children gathered at the window to watch him pull the taffy. He would place it on a big hook on the wall, then walking backward he would pull the taffy into such a long rope that he would screech, fearing it would strike the floor. Suddenly he would give it a swing and it would loop safely on the hook again, and Miles would laugh while we gave sighs of relief. When he had pulled it to a porous texture, he would place it on a table and cut it into small pieces. We paid a nickel for a sack of it.

On the north side of Jefferson Street, between Second and First Streets, was a watering trough and hitching rails where farmers could leave their horses while they did their shopping. I liked to see how many

horses were tied there.

On the southeast corner of Second and Jefferson Streets was what we called "Chinatown." It was where a number of Chinamen had opened a laundry, being out of work after the Yaquina Railroad was completed. It was a common sight to see a Chinamen come trotting in, balancing a pole across his shoulders. On each end of the pole hung a bag of laundry.

The next and last place of interest to me on Main Street was Phillips' Blacksmith Shop on the southeast corner of Second and Adams. I was always fortunate, it seemed, to see Mr. Phillips wearing his big leather apron and shoeing a horse, or seeing him heating irons in a forge to a red-hot temperature.

Well, that brought me back to Washington Street and I skipped home and delivered the mail.

The fact that there were no radios, television or movies in those days and only a small school library, probably accounted for this tour of Main Street being such an interesting pasttime for me.

THE OPERA HOUSE

The Corvallis Opera House was built in 1870 by means of public subscription. It was the first public meeting place in the town and considered one of the finest in the West. Many famous actors and actresses came to Corvallis to perform on its stage. The building measured fifty by one hundred feet and stood on the southwest corner of Fourth and Madison Streets. The main entrance was on the east and opened onto Fourth Street.

The stage was in the west side of the building and was about three feet higher than the main floor. A balcony in the shape of a horseshoe was built above the floor in the back of the room, giving the theater a large seating capacity. Straight-backed chairs served as seats and were moved in and out as occasion required.

There was a large stage curtain in the middle on which was painted a street scene of some foreign land. Bordering the curtain were painted advertising signs, painted for local merchants.

On the floor in front of the curtain was a row of lights that blinked at curtain-time and reflected on the stage. A big wood stove stood on the main floor at the right-hand side of the stage and was the only means of heating the building, and at times the room was quite chilly.

The piano was at the left. Inez St. Claire Wilson was the pianist.

There was a characteristic odor in the building. When the stove door was opened to add wood to the fire, there was always some smoke emitted, and some tobacco smoke came in from the entrance. There was usually, also, a fresh paint odor from recently painted signs on the stage curtain as well as a musty odor from props that were stored in an unheated room. A combination of these odors, although not particularly disagreeable, was quite noticeable. However, when the lights blinked and the curtain went up, all was forgotten.

All kinds of entertainment were held there by both the college and the townspeople. There were parties, plays, graduation exercises, and even basketball games.

In 1898 an armory was built on the OAC campus and that provided the college a place of entertainment of its own.

About the year 1900, traveling stock companies came on the road and brought many fine shows. The first one played in the Opera House was "Evangeline." Following were "East Lynn," "Sy Perkins," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "The Missouri Girl," "Ten Nights in a Bar-room," "Negro Minstrels and other musicals.

Mother didn't care a great deal for these shows, but Dad and I never missed one. He had a standing order for two seats in the third row. I sat on the aisle which enabled me to see better. There were several box seats along the wall to the right of the stage, but they were seldom occupied.

One night, just before the curtain, I heard a slight commotion and turned to see what was causing it. To my astonishment, a local merchant and his wife were being ushered to box seats. The lady was dressed in a white satin evening gown which had a short train, and she was adorned with diamond-studded jewelry. Her husband followed, attired in swallow-tails and carried a silk stove-pipe hat in his hand, but watching every step to avoid treading on his wife's lovely dress. This lady had lived the most of her life in San Francisco where people dressed formally for the opera. I am sure that this was the first time she had attended a show in Corvallis-- and probably the last!

In 1905 Frank Groves became manager of the Opera House and served in that capacity for ten years.

For seventy years the Opera House provided the people of Corvallis a place for entertainment and afforded them much pleasure.

As other halls and theaters were built, the Opera House was used to house business establishments; the Gazette Times was published there for a time and Witzig's

Electrical Appliance Shop was located there.

Finally the building was razed and that corner was used as a parking lot for the Safeway Store.

THE CORVALLIS COFFEE CLUB

The constant danger of fires had made the women of Corvallis panicky. But now that the town had an organized fire department with firemen, a hose-cart, and fire hydrants, they felt much safer. Yet, since the firemen were volunteers, the ladies believed it was their duty to do something to help.

So, in 1883, they organized the "Coffee Club." Its duty was to serve hot coffee to the firemen while they were fighting a fire. All the prominent ladies in Corvallis joined it. They met the first Monday afternoon of every month in the ballroom of the City Hall. It was a very elite club. My mother, Mrs. R. C. Kiger, was a charter member. She was often made chairman of committees because we lived only two blocks from the hall and it was convenient to hold committee meetings at our home. Each committee served until they actually served coffee to the firemen at a fire.

Since father always left for the farms before daylight, mother took me with her when she was called to a fire at night, fearing she would be detained at the fire until it was time for father to leave and she didn't want me to be left alone.

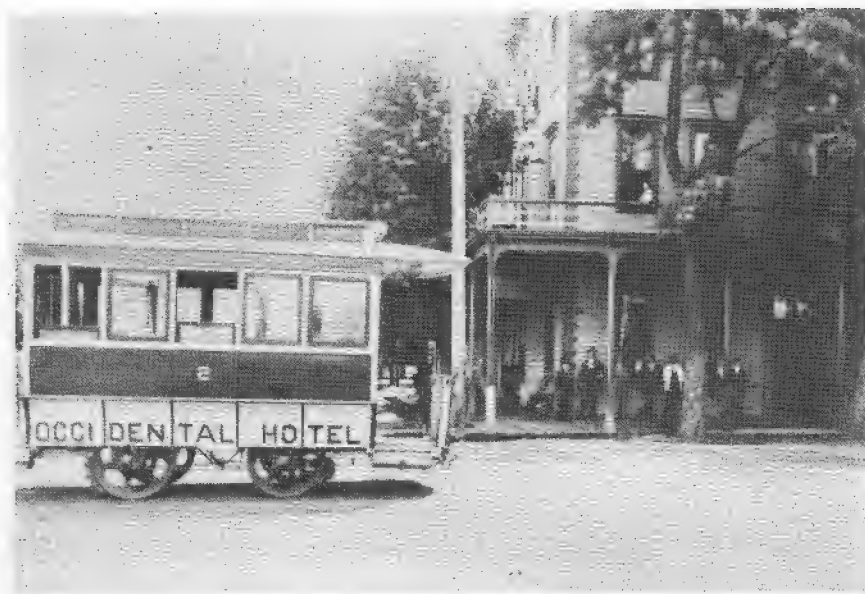
When the firebell rang at night she would jump out of bed calling, "Minerva, get up quick! Just put on your shoes and your coat over your gown! We haven't time for you to dress!" And she started on a run. I followed with my unbuttoned shoes clapping on the walk and my gown hanging six inches below my coat.

There was a kitchen on the ground floor of the City Hall at the southwest corner. Mother, having a key, unlocked the door, went to the four-lid cookstove in which a fire was always laid, touched a lighted match to it, then drawing cold water from the tap, poured it into shallow pans so it would heat quickly, trying to get enough hot water in a hurry and start the coffee boiling.

But usually, before it was made, we would hear the tinkling of the bells on the hose-cart and we knew the fire was out.

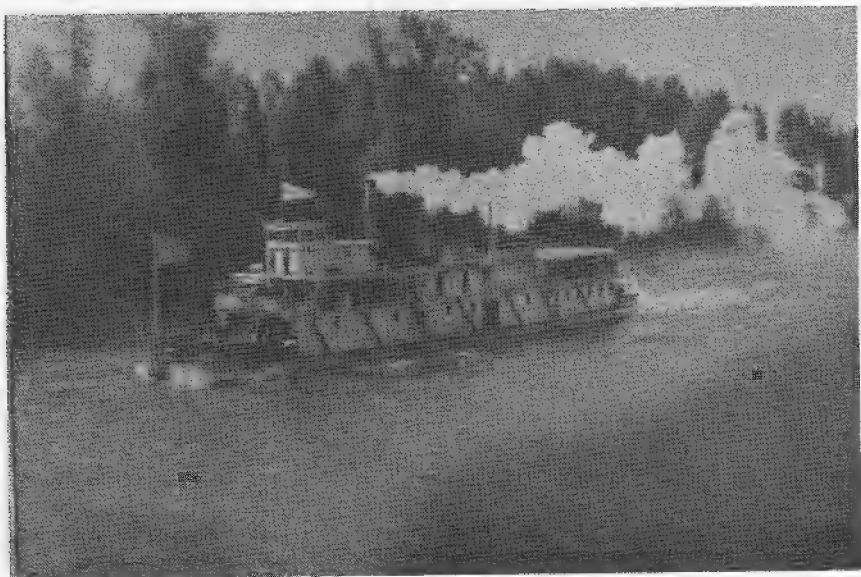


Carriage Factory, 13th and A

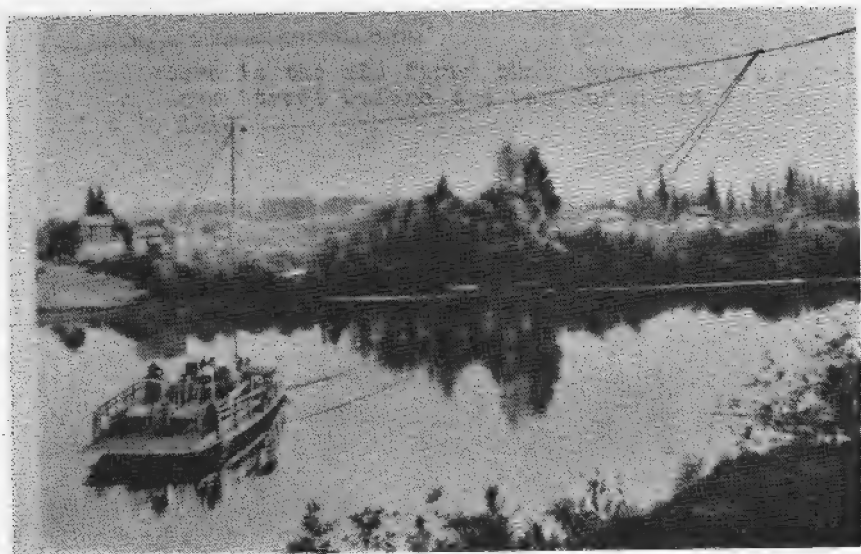


Horse Car (courtesy of Harriet Moore)

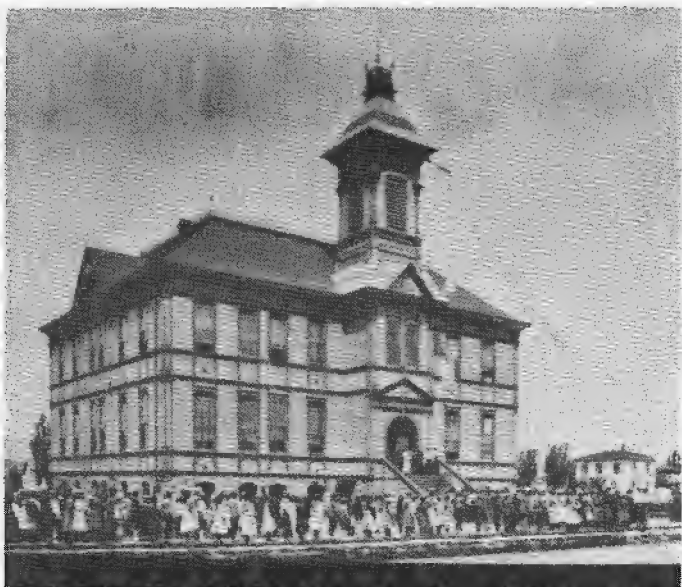
(Photos courtesy of Ball Studio)



Steamboat on the Willamette



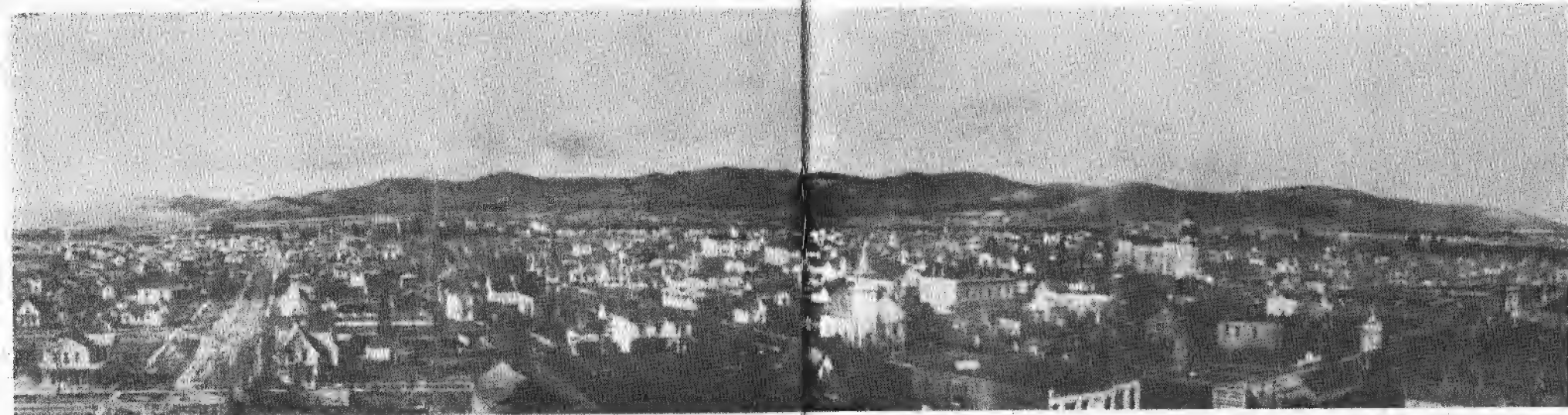
Ferry, east end of Van Buren



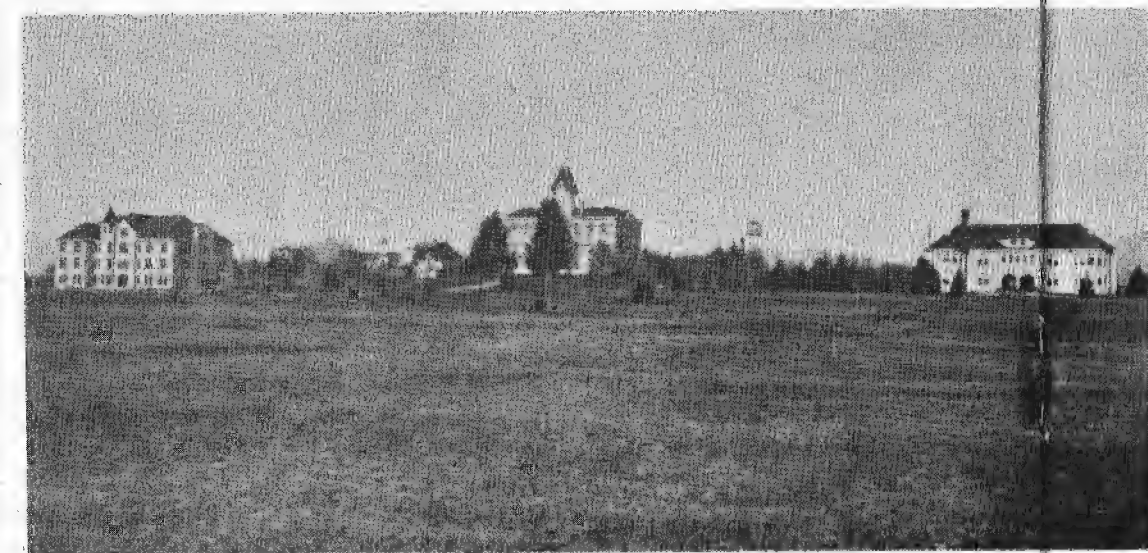
Central School, N.W. 7th and Madison



Capital Building, N.W. 2nd and Adams



Bird's-eye View from Water Tower (courtesy of Mrs. Paul Zedwick)



Oregon Agriculture College



City Hall, S. E. 4th and Madison



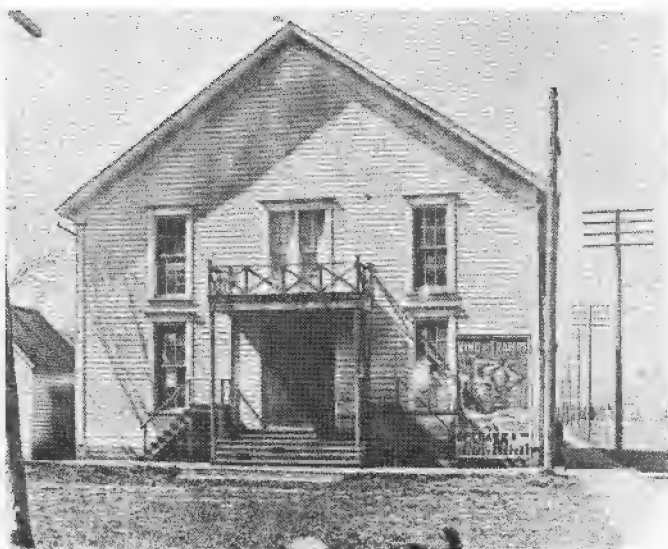
Corvallis Hotel (Hammel) South from Monroe



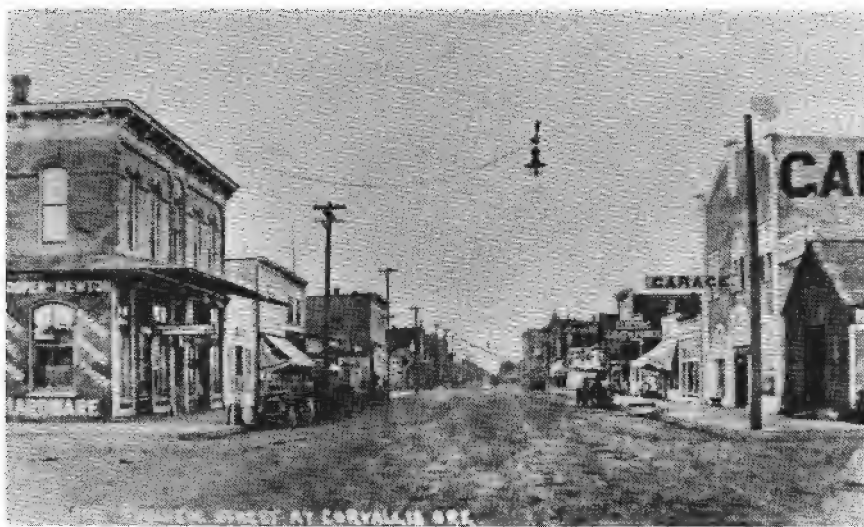
Water Tower, N.W. First and Adams



Court House, N. W. 4th and Monroe



Opera House, S. W. 4th and Madison



Second Street, north from Adams



Second Street north from Jefferson

Immediately the firemen jumped out of their harness and hit for home, with no desire for coffee.

Then the ladies poured the half-brewed coffee down the sink, carried the blazing sticks of stove wood out into the yard with fire-tongs and dashed water on them to put the fire out, emptied the ash-pan, sprinkled water on the hot grates, and relaid the fire. (The firemen kept the wood box filled with wood and kindling.)

There was always one little old women who arrived, panting and perspiring but smiling, just in time to help empty the coffee. No telling how far she had come, but she never failed to get there even though she had to retrace her steps at once.

Years later Ben Hur Lampman wrote heart-touching stores about "The Little Old Lady Who Lived at the End of the Lane." These were published in the Oregonian and everyone loved them. I have wondered if she could have been the one who served on the coffee committee.

Regardless of how the fires raged in Corvallis in early days, a fire didn't have a ghost of a chance with that team of young firemen with their hose-cart and fire hydrant.

As a child, the "Coffee Club" didn't rate very highly with me. I thought it was the silliest club I had ever seen--to work so hard at all times of the night to make coffee, then pour it out and go back to bed.

This went on for three months and I grew terribly tired of hearing that firebell ringing at night. I began, thoughtlessly, to wish for a big fire--one that would give the ladies time to get the coffee made.

Another time when the women met at our home, I was permitted to remain through the meeting, providing I kept quiet. They always served refreshments at the Monday meetings, and each committee wanted to serve the nicest refreshments possible. At this meeting one lady told of a brand new dessert--gelatin. She described it as delicious red cubes, topped with whipped cream. The others decided at once to serve gelatin with whipped cream and cake at the next meeting.

The lady who suggested it, agreed to make it.

Her description of that beautiful dessert fairly made my mouth water and the minute the women left I began begging mother to bring me some. Finally she said, "All right, if there is any left I'll bring you a taste."

The day of the meeting arrived and I could hardly wait for mother to get home. At last I saw her coming a block away, and I ran to meet her. Sure enough, she had a bowl of that lovely dessert!

When we reached home, she gave me a generous serving and placed a spoonful of whipped cream on top. I put a spoonful of it into my mouth -- ugh! I thought I couldn't swallow it, but it melted and ran down my throat in spite of me. The lady who had made it neither sweetened nor flavored the gelatin or the cream.

"What is the matter, dear?" asked mother.
"Don't you like it?"

"It's the prettiest but the awfulest puddin' I ever ate," I declared.

And my estimation of the "Coffee Club" sank a little lower--they couldn't even cook I decided.

Then one night my wish for a big fire came true. The ice factory on the corner of Third Street and Western Avenue caught fire. The bins where the ice was stored had double walls with sawdust between them and the blocks of ice were packed in sawdust. When that caught fire it burned for several days.

The women had ample time to make the coffee. They filled a washboiler more than half full of hot coffee. There was a wooden handle at each end of the boiler and two ladies carried it five blocks to the fire. I went along and carried tin cups, strung on a heavy cord.

One at a time the firemen rushed over and drank cups of that hot coffee. It was a cold, frosty morning and when I saw those men, soaking wet, their teeth chattering and their hands shaking, I repented. I was terribly sorry that I had wished for that fire!

Other members of the Club came to relieve those on the committee, many bringing sandwiches or cookies,

and they kept hot coffee for the firemen as long as the fire lasted.

My opinion of the Coffee Club changed completely, I realized how mistaken I had been and saw how very much they were helping.

Later the "Coffee Club" became the "Corvallis Women's Club." It was admitted to "The State Federation of Women's Clubs," and in 1914 to the "General Federation."

MARY'S RIVER FLAT

There was a low level area on the southeast corner of Avery's claim that overflowed at times of high water. It was known as Mary's River Flat and extended north from Mary's River to A Street, and from Third Street east to the Willamette River. It consisted of about 25 or 30 acres and was comparatively level. There were no buildings on it, due to the flooding, but it was not waste land. It was a good grass pasture and many people staked their cows there in the summer.

There were usually from one to three Indian camps along Mary's River, just east of the north bridge approach. They came in from Siletz and the coast to sell the baskets they had woven through the winter months. These baskets were mostly of the market-basket type, woven from reeds and willow branches. They were serviceable, quite attractive, and much in demand by the white women. At first the squaws would trade them for used clothing, but some of the white people cheated them by trading clothing they could not possibly wear and they had neither the ability or the means to alter them. The Indians were not as dumb as people thought and soon began to demand, "Monie, Monie" for their baskets and the white women paid them cash.

Occasionally a band of Gypsies came through Corvallis and camped on the Flat. They always had a band of horses that roamed about. The women went through the residential district, stopping at homes and asking for food. A favorite appeal that they made was, "Milk, Seek baby." No one ever saw a sick baby, but they collected a lot of milk for them.

Every summer a circus came to town, "Ringling Brothers" and "Barnum Bailey" were the big ones. They pitched the big tents on the Flat. That was a big day. Boys hurried to try to get a job carrying water to the animals for a ticket to the show, as money was scarce among them.

There was always a big parade in the morning. The animal cages were built on wheels and were drawn through the main streets by prancing horses. The clowns joked and gestured while the calliope, a sort of mechanical organ, played its characteristic tune.

A performance was given in the afternoon and another in the evening and were always well attended. Everything about the circus was well organized. They came by train, unloaded, pitched their tents, paraded, performed, and departed for the next town--all within twenty-four hours. Morning found the Flat clear and quiet.

At other times, a carnival or maybe just a merry-go-round came to the Flat and, as scarce as money was, people managed to purchase tickets and see the show.

STEAMBOATS ON THE WILLAMETTE

Steamboats played an important part in developing the West when the few roads were only trails for horse-drawn vehicles. This was especially true in the Willamette Valley where the broad Willamette River made a ready highway its full length. The channel was deep enough for boats to ply from Portland to Corvallis the year around, and through the winter, when the water was higher, boats could go as far as Eugene.

The first boat came up the river to Corvallis in 1852, and that was the beginning of a great river traffic. Next, two boats, the "Ruth" and the "Albany," began making three round trips a week. Many more boats joined them, some of which were the "Bently," "The Three Sisters," and the "Col. Hogg." They carried both freight and passengers and made stops at each town along the river for passengers or freight. It was an all day's trip to Portland and the fare was one dollar each way. Excellent and lavish meals were served on board.

At times there were as many as four boats landing grain at the Corvallis Grist Mills.

About the year 1900, some boats began making excursion trips. The "Pomona" made Sunday excursions during the summer to Independence. It was a most delightful trip-- imagine floating down the beautiful Willamette River with its banks tinted many colors with flowers and foliage. It was an all-day trip, leaving Corvallis in the early morning and returning by moonlight. A delicious chicken dinner was served on the boat and the Corvallis band went along and played to the delight of the passengers. The fare was a dollar and a half for the trip.

Mother and I often went on this excursion as far as Buena Vista where we had relatives. The boat would dock there and let us off, then pick us up as it returned.

As the boat rounded the bend in the river just north of Corvallis, it always whistled, announcing its

arrival, and the end of a most enjoyable trip. I shall never forget that thrilling, deep-throated whistle.

River boats continued to operate for years but gradually the trains, being faster and more far-reaching, replaced them. The last steamboat came up the Willamette in 1920.

CATFISH

My father, R. C. Kiger, made a business trip East. It was during this trip that he had his first taste of catfish. He liked them so much that he ordered a quantity of them shipped to Corvallis in order to get a start of them in Benton County.

Some time later the expressman delivered a load of them to our house. Mother had gone downtown and father had not returned from the farm, so they were placed on the porch.

When father returned, I told him that the expressman had brought some fish.

"Where are they?" he asked.

I told him that they were on the front porch.

"On the front porch!" he exclaimed. And he opened the front door and found the porch full of tightly packed gunny sacks.

"Of all things!" he declared. "To think that anyone would be foolish enough to ship live fish halfway across the United States in gunny sacks!"

Still muttering, he filled the bathtub about two-thirds full of cold water and emptied two sacks of fish into it. Their tails and fins were dry and there was no sign of life. He walked out of the house in disgust. I didn't understand what he was saying as I followed him to the barn.

After a while I went back to see if mother had returned. She had not, but I heard some kind of noise and opened the bathroom door. Water dripped from the ceiling and walls and covered the floor. Those fish were having a ball.

I screamed. Mother had just come in and came running when she heard me scream. Her eyes flashed at the sight of the fish in the bathtub.

"Go tell your father to get in here and get those fish out of here," she exclaimed.

I ran to deliver the message. Father came on the run.

"Well, I'll be _____ !" he declared.

He dipped the fish up in buckets and carried them out. I held the sacks open while he poured the fish into them. Only two had failed to revive, but we put them in, too, thinking they might recover. But we left a wet trail through the house.

Father hitched the team to the hack and spent the most of the night distributing the fish in lakes and sloughs where he thought they would be able to live.

They thrived and multiplied and in a few years people had good fishing as well as good eating as a result of his effort. Flood waters washed many of the fish into distant lakes. They are still being caught in many parts of the Willamette Valley.

THE FOURTH OF JULY

Aside from Christmas, the Fourth of July was the biggest day of the year. There was always a hot time in Corvallis on that day. People living in the country came for miles to the celebration. It usually began with a twenty-one gun salute, followed by a hose-cart race between the Corvallis team and one from an adjoining town, usually Albany.

The whole town was decorated with flags, and red, white, and blue bunting. Firecrackers popped from before daylight until after midnight. There were run-aways, fires, and accidents, but nothing stopped the celebration.

There was a big parade in the morning. Merchants and organizations decorated floats, and bands played. The highlight of the parade was the "Goddess of Liberty." Names of several of the most popular young ladies of the town were selected and voted upon for this honor. Votes sold for one cent apiece. The one selected rode in a chariot drawn by three prancing horses. She wore a white flowing gown and a golden crown sat upon her lovely head. Some of those who received this honor were: Grace Huff, Nonie Smith, Cleo Johnson, and Georgia White.

For the little girls there was the "Liberty Wagon." There were many little girls dressed in white, waving small American flags, and riding on a wagon with seats like a flight of steps--all decorated with colored bunting.

After the parade, everyone went to a small grove along Mary's River, called Avery's Park, for a big picnic dinner. Here a stage had been erected and gaily decorated with red, white, and blue, and, following the dinner, a program was held. Everyone stood for the singing of "Star Spangled Banner," then the "Declaration of Independence" was read. There were patriotic speeches, recitations, and patriotic music by the band.

Following the program, games of chance took over. These included the potato race; the three-legged race; catching a greased pig; or climbing a greased pole.

In the evening, fireworks were held on Mary's River flat. The whole area was lighted with sky-rockets and Roman candles. Because they were reflected on the water, there appeared to be twice the number.

Dancing followed the fireworks and continued into the night. Later, after the streets were paved, there were street dances.

It often rained on the Fourth and the red, white, and blue bunting dripped purple, but it didn't dampen the celebration or the fun.

HALLOWE'EN

In 1900 there were no treats at Hallowe'en, just tricks. Pranksters were on the loose. First they ran down the alleys and overturned all the "Chick-Sale's" houses.

Most people had fences around their property, so the favorite trick was to remove the gates and either place them on top of a barn roof or some other outlandish location, or wire them shut so tightly that it was easier to climb the fence the next morning than to un-wire the gate.

Most residences had a little platform in front to bridge the drainage ditch which ran along the street. These enabled people to get in and out of a carriage. The pranksters turned these bottom side up.

Sometimes buggy wheels were reversed, or, if the goblins were especially ambitious, they managed to get a buggy on top of a barn.

Worst of all were the awful "tick-tacks." They sounded like machine guns when run on windows and caused you to jump out of your chair from fright. I remember the time that two of my girl friends, Julia and Helen McFadden, made a tick-tack. They watched their brothers making them, preparing to have some fun on Hallowe'en, for that was considered the boys' night. Girls feared ghosts and goblins and remained at home.

But this time the girls left their brothers at work and went to their room. One of them remarked, "Those things are easy to make. I could make one myself."

"Let's try it," exclaimed the other one.

They gathered the necessary materials--a spool, a string, and a stick and pocketknife, and went to work.

They were pleased with the finished product, declaring it was every bit as good as the ones the boys were making.

Their oldest brother, the late Julian McFadden, lived just a few blocks from them, having been married a year or so. The night that goblins prowled around,

one of the girls suggested, "Let's go down and try our tick-tack at Julian's house." So they left their room, sneaked out of the house into the darkness, and away they ran.

At Julian's house they parted the shrubs and reached a window. They saw Julian sitting by the fireplace, reading his paper and his wife, Agnes, sitting in her rocking chair, busily crocheting.

They placed their tick-tack against the window and pulled the string. For a split second they thought they had never heard such a loud noise, but to their horror they saw Agnes fall from her chair in a faint while Julian sprang to his feet. Mercy! They had never dreamed of such a thing as that happening! They threw the tick-tack into the bushes and lit for home at break-neck speed. They reached their room safely and, they hoped, unobserved.

Their father, Judge McFadden, had the habit of holding a trial at the dinner table when there was any kind of trouble in his family. All were sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

On this occasion, dinner being over, the Judge rapped on the table for silence.

"I suppose you are all aware of what occurred at Julian's last night," spoke the Judge, and beginning with the oldest son, inquired:

"Burke, are you guilty of this dastardly act?"

"Not guilty, your honor," he quickly replied.

"Brian, did you commit this act?" he asked.

"No, Sir," he answered.

And so on, he questioned each of the boys. The girls trembled. Never had they been so anxious to begin clearing the table, get to the kitchen, and begin washing the dishes. But they gave no sign of it for fear the Judge's keen eye would notice.

Far be it for the Judge to suspect his daughters of doing such a thing, so, after questioning the boys, he decided that someone else was guilty of the offense. The culprits were never apprehended.

ELECTION DAY

Election Day was always a big day in Corvallis and 1900 was an election year.

There were two political parties, Republicans and Democrats, the same as today. Each party had its own idea as to how the government should be run, but probably the greatest difference between them was that the Republicans believed in imposing a high tariff on foreign imports, while the Democrats believed in free trade. There was great rivalry between the parties. The men usually voted their ticket straight.

People were very patriotic on election day. The whole town was decorated with red, white, and blue bunting and an American flag waved from every post and building.

Each party ran free wagons to carry voters to the polls. One driver noticed a man in his wagon whom he knew belonged to the other party. He stopped the team and said, "This is a Republican wagon." The man climbed out and walked.

There was always a big parade in the morning. Merchants and organizations arranged floats, citizens decorated their carriages in red, white, and blue and drove in the parade, the band marched and played patriotic music.

My brother, Dick Kiger, trained his team to drive tandem (one behind the other) for the occasion. He decorated his buggy in red, white, and blue bunting, with a large banner above the seat displaying the picture of William McKinley for president and Teddy Roosevelt for vice president, the Republican candidates. On the head of each horse was a small flag and the horses wore blankets, made of bunting with pictures of the candidates on each side.

The parade was in formation, the band struck up, and the parade began to move. It was Dick's turn to start when suddenly a plump suffraget, with a wide ribbon across her breast on which was the slogan, "Vote for Womens' Suffrage," dashed from the sidewalk,

stepped into the buggy and seated herself beside Dick.

It took him so completely by surprise that he was speechless. His face turned scarlet and he slid lower and lower in the seat, as if to get out of sight.

His passenger bowed, waved, and threw kisses to the crowd and received wild acclaim from the women lining the streets. Men, as a rule, resented the idea of women voting, figuring that was a man's job.

However, Womens' Suffrage passed in 1920.

There was much drinking and betting on that day as to the outcome of the election. Returns came in slowly and were announced from the steps of the Court House. Anxious people crowded the grounds.

William McKinley was elected to a second term as President with Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt Vice President.

CHRISTMAS IN CORVALLIS

Christmas was really a "Very Merry Christmas" in Corvallis. Although people had little, they made the most of what they did have. They went to the hills to cut their Christmas trees and, though they often had to carry them for miles, it was lots of fun just the same. The tree was placed in the parlor and the children were not permitted to see it again until Christmas Eve. Then the doors were opened and everyone rushed in to find the tree decorated with tinsel ropes, popcorn, strung on heavy thread, ornaments made from bits of colored paper and ribbon. It was lighted with candles held in small metal holders that clamped to the limbs of the tree. They made the whole tree glow and it was very beautiful. But they were also quite dangerous for often the flame of a candle touched fir needles and quickly a blaze engulfed the whole tree, bringing tragedy to the happy occasion.

Most gifts were hand-made. Weeks had probably been spent in their making. Grown-ups usually appreciated wearing apparel, -- a pair of socks or ties appealed to the men. The women liked gloves, aprons and dresses. Dolls were usually dressed for the little girls, and perhaps a bought toy, i. e. a little fire wagon with iron horses for the boys.

Just before going to bed on Christmas Eve, the children hung up their stockings at the fireplace mantle (if one was available) for Santa to fill. In the morning they rushed down to see if he had called and found the stockings filled and overflowing with goodies.

On Christmas Day, relatives and friends gathered for a big turkey dinner and a Merry Christmas together.

On Christmas Day there was always a Christmas program and a Christmas tree at each of the churches. Each child received a sack of candy.

"THE EGLIN CASE"

THE TOWN'S GREATEST MYSTERY

At this time, Mr. Eglin and his son were running a livery stable in Corvallis at the southeast corner of Third and Madison Streets, the present site of the Hout Building.

A Corvallis lady desired to go to Albany in order to catch a train into Idaho. She hired young Eglin to take her to the Albany Depot. When they reached the Albany depot he helped her out of the buggy, she paid him the fare for making the trip, then entered the depot to purchase her ticket and to wait for the train.

Young Eglin was never seen or heard of afterward.

The team was found standing on First Street in Corvallis, near the Willamette River, the lines wrapped around the whip-stock. (That was the customary way of leaving the lines when horses were left without a driver.)

People searched far and wide for him. They carefully examined the river bank and also dragged the river without finding a single clue. They continued searching for years. It was the town's greatest mystery.

The Norman Lily family owned a farm just south of the "Mill Race" above Corvallis and were friends of the family. Arthur, a son, was the same age as my brothers, Dick and John Kiger, and Arthur often came down to our farm to hunt or fish, with the boys. In recent year he was ill and I would sometimes stop to visit him. He enjoyed talking about the old times and one day he asked, "Do you remember the Eglin case?" I told him that although I was quite young at the time it happened, people had talked about it for years and that I remembered it very well. Then he told me of an experience that he had at about the time that Eglin disappeared.

He was riding his bicycle down to our farm to go fishing with my brothers. He had been riding on the

rough wagon road for about five miles and felt pretty tired. When he was about a mile and a half from our farm, he passed a barn where a man was working with a team and wagon. He decided to stop for a few minutes rest. The young man had a load of dirt and was filling up a well. Child-like, Arthur asked, "Why are you filling up your well?" "Oh," replied the man, "we have another well over at the house. We don't need two wells, do we?"

Arthur said he didn't know whether they needed two wells or not and he wasn't concerned about it or interested in watching him fill it up. He knew the boys were waiting, and being a bit rested, he got onto his bicycle and hurried on his way.

He found the boys waiting and they rushed to the lake and fished until almost dark. He had chores to do and he knew that his father would be provoked at him getting home so late.

Upon reaching home, he hurried to do his chores and never gave a thought to the man filling the well--in fact he never mentioned it to anyone.

"Now, since I have time to reminisce, I have recalled this incident," he said. "After living on a farm all of my life, I know how much work it was to make a well in early days when they were dug by hand and lined with bricks or rocks. No one had enough of them and besides, a well at the barn was almost as necessary as one at the house. I don't believe that fellow was telling me the truth," he said.

That brought a recollection to my mind. My mother and the mother of the young man who was filling the well were good friends, and we often stopped, on the way to our farm, to visit a little while with her. (She was a widow and her son was running the farm.) I remembered stopping there at about the time and finding her crying. She told mother that her son was drinking so hard, she didn't know what had come over him. She said that he was neglecting the farm so much that she feared she would have to sell it.

I remembered this because I was very fond of this woman who was always doing nice things for me and it hurt me to see her so sad.

Then Arthur and I put two and two together and this is what we figured happened.

When Eglin received the money for making the trip to Albany, he bought a bottle of whiskey, and as he passed his friend's house, he stopped to treat him to a drink. (We knew that they both drank.)

He lift the lines wrapped around the whip-stock and left the horses standing in the road at the front of the barn. Having travelled about fifteen miles, they were willing to stand for some time and rest.

One drink led to another and the two men became intoxicated.

Wells were built only a foot and a half or two feet above the ground and it would have been easy for a staggering drunk man to have toppled into the well, or they might have had a fight.

The horses, in the meantime, became restless and started up of their own accord. With the lines tight, they moved on as through being driven. There was very little traffic on the roads at that time and they probably did not meet another vehicle. There were only three houses between the barn and town so it was doubtful if anyone would have noticed that a buggy passing was driverless, especially if the buggy top had been up. Upon reaching town, the horses had turned onto First Street from Second instead of Third Street, and consequently missed the stable.

When the young man sobered up and realized what had happened, he became panicky. The only way he knew to conceal what had occurred was to fill up the well, and he did so at once.

Of course, this was only Arthur's and my deduction, and could be very far from what really happened, but it seemed feasible, so we laughingly declared that we had solved the Eglin case.

Could this young man have held the key that would have solved the great mystery, and never mentioned

it to anyone? We actually believed that he did.

So many years have passed that no one remains who would care enough to dig out a well, even if it could be located, to solve the case.

So Eglin will remain one of the thousands who disappeared in the West without leaving a trace.

CORVALLIS' WORST SHOOTING TRAGEDY

There was a gang of teenage boys in Corvallis who had been accused of doing some stealing about town and were causing the officers quite a bit of trouble. One boy, called Peg-leg Keady by his pals because of the fact that he limped, was believed to be the leader of them. One evening he was in the Opera House watching a show when one of the boys ran in and told him that the Sheriff was looking for him.

He jumped up, ran out of the building and down the street. He encountered a Deputy Sheriff, Jim Dunn, at the corner of Third and Madison Streets. Keady drew a pistol and shot Dunn. He fell dead on the street.

Dave Osburn, night-watchman, heard the shooting and ran over to see what the trouble was, and Keady shot him. The shot wasn't fatal but Osborn was so severely wounded that he didn't recover for months.

By this time the Sheriff, Telt Burnett, arrived on the scene. Keady shot at Burnett, leaving some powder burns, but no other injury. Then Sheriff Burnett drew a gun and killed Keady.

This incidence left two men dead, one seriously injured, and another with powder burns that he carried the rest of his life.

These boys were from good families but had gotten onto the road that led to disaster.

THE "HOLY ROLLERS"

In 1903, two newcomers arrived in Corvallis. One was Franz Edward Creffield and the other, a man by the name of Brooks.

Creffield was a small man, about thirty years of age. His hair was a sandy color with a reddish cast and his eyes were a pale blue. It wasn't his appearance that attracted attention, but his voice. He spoke in a deep thunder-like tone that seemed to make the room tremble. It was a tone that he had evidently cultivated in order to make himself appear to be a person of great power.

Since these men were strangers in Corvallis, they decided to attend a Salvation Army meeting in the hope of making some acquaintances. They were welcomed there and from then on, attended the meetings regularly.

Soon Creffield began taking an active part in them. He sang, prayed, and gave quotations from the Bible, in which he seemed to be well versed.

Creffield was the aggressive one of the two men. Brooks merely went along with him.

Before long the Salvation Army men, who conducted the meetings, began to distrust Creffield, feeling that he was attempting to take charge of the meetings, and they resented the intrusion.

Then Creffield organized a creed of his own and began holding meetings in the homes of the members. They called themselves "The Holy Disciples" or "God's Holy Few."

The old Capitol building was moved several times and now stood unoccupied near the middle of the block on the east side of Second Street between Adams and Washington Streets. It was old and dilapidated, but it would give them more room, so Creffield began meeting there. Then he proclaimed to be "Joshua, the Prophet" and said that unless people obeyed his commands, they would be damned.

Men didn't approve of him and withdrew, but he

seemed to have a strange power with the women. They believed he was a messenger right from Heaven, and obeyed his every command. Thus, his congregation was made up entirely of women.

At first he was cautious of his actions, but as he became sure of himself he grew bolder and gave strange commands to his members. He would weave back and forth, waving his arms and chanting, "Roll, ye sinners, roll," apparently in an effort to roll away their sins. He disliked clothing, claiming it was "vile" and would tear off his garments. The women exchanged their clothes for "Mother-Hubbard" dresses which were ankle-length with full skirts gathered into narrow yokes with long sleeves and high necklines. They went barefooted and bareheaded with their hair hanging down their backs at a time when women wore their hair pinned high on their heads.

As time went on, the meetings grew longer and wilder. The members screamed, moaned, and rolled on the floor. This became the talk of the town. Some people were alarmed, some annoyed, others merely curious. But all were concerned.

We lived about two blocks, in a direct line, from the meeting place and could hear them yelling and screaming, far into the night.

One night my Mother and her neighbor, Mrs. Berchtold, decided to attend one of the meetings and see what was going on. I went, too.

There was a policeman at the door. He asked, in a surprised voice, "Mrs. Kiger! You, too?"

"Mrs. Berchtold and I just came over to learn what it is that keeps us awake until three o'clock in the morning," she replied. He opened the door and bowed us in. We walked down a short hallway, through double doors, and entered their meeting room. No one seemed to notice our presence and we stood along the back wall.

There was a low platform at the front of the room on which a woman was lying, covered with a sheet. Creffield was standing beside her, passing his hands

back and forth above her and seemed to be praying that the Lord would take her up bodily to Heaven.

Other women were either kneeling or sitting on the floor, their eyes closed as they pounded on benches with their fists as they cried, "God, have mercy" or "God will have victory tonight!"

Those who had worn their hair pinned up soon lost their hair-pins, they had pounded so hard. Now their hair hung uncoiled down their backs.

We saw plenty in a few minutes and hurried out. The policeman grinned.

People were becoming entirely too curious to suite the "Prophet," so he decided to camp out for the summer where they would have more privacy. Directly west of "Kiger Island" the river forked and formed a small island known as "Smith's Island." It overflowed in the winter so was used only as a summer pasture, and there were no buildings on it. Creffield chose this for a campground. He and the women moved there. They cut poles and fir boughs and built structures resembling wigwams. One was large enough to hold their meetings and quite a few smaller ones were for sleeping quarters. They also erected a few tents.

My father, R. C. Kiger, had large peach orchards on "Kiger Island." When he hauled peaches to market, he saved time by crossing this small island and fording the two shallow branches of the river instead of crossing on the ferry that we used in the winter. Now, the only people we saw as we crossed the little island were from one to three women lying under trees with sheets covering them, and a few very young children, playing. The others heard the water splashing as we crossed the river, and got out of sight.

The men in town knew that father passed through this camp often and they began asking him about the "Holy Disciples."

"Holy Disciples!" exclaimed father. "I call them "Holy Rollers!"

The name seemed to fit them perfectly, and it

rolled across the nation. I never heard them called anything else after that.

I usually rode into town with father when he went in with a load of peaches. One day, just before starting to town, he brought several over-ripe peaches and laid them on the seat between us.

"What in the world is he going to do with those?" I thought to myself.

As we passed through the "Holy Roller" camp, he picked up one of these peaches and threw it at the first woman we passed lying under a sheet. It splashed all over the sheet. But she didn't move. The same thing happened as we passed two more. Not one of them so much as flinched when the peach struck.

Father didn't do that to annoy them. He believed these women were hypnotized, and when they failed to move when hit by a peach, he felt sure he was right.

They must have lived on peaches. They raided the orchard almost every night. We found buckets, boxes, and pans that they had lost in the darkness. Father would gladly have given them all the peaches they could use, peaches that were too ripe for market, but just right to use and already picked. But in running through the orchard, trying to find ripe peaches in the dark, they knocked off bushels of them.

At the approach of cold weather, the "Holy Rollers" returned to Corvallis. They held meetings at the home of O.P. Hurt, whose wife and daughter were members.

We had some neighbors on our block whom we admired very much. Every Sunday they passed our home on their way to church. The grown son and daughter walked together, followed by the mother and father, all smartly dressed and each carrying a Bible. In winter the boy attended college but in the summer the father and son went away to work. The women remained at home.

One day we were shocked when we saw the women pass our house, their hair hanging down their backs, and barefooted.

It wasn't very long after that when Creffield's organization must have needed funds, so our neighbors held a sale. They sold off practically everything in their home, leaving only enough for light housekeeping.

Now Creffield announced that he had been commanded to select a young woman from among members of the organization to be the spiritual "Mother of the Church."

People of the community were enraged and claimed that Creffield was crazy. He was examined, found sane and was ordered to leave town. But some men who had seen pictures that had been taken while the Holy Rollers were encamped on the Island, decided that Creffield deserved greater punishment than merely being made to leave town, so they seized him, took him to the city limits, tarred and feathered him, and told him to get out and stay out. He fled into the countryside.

In some way, Creffield managed to return to the Hurt residence which was just south of Mary's River on Fischer's Lane and outside the city limits. Maude Hurt and her mother hid him. A few days later Maude and Creffield were married. Creffield soon went to Portland.

The husband of one of the members swore out a warrant for his arrest but the authorities were unable to find him. Mrs. Hurt and Maude were sent to the asylum.

Roy Hurt, the Hurt's twelve year old son, who was living at home with his father decided to go fishing. He had placed his bamboo pole under the house for safe keeping and went to get it. As he knelt down at the air-vent in the brick foundation and reached under the house for the fishing pole, a voice asked, "Maude, is it you?" and Roy saw a pair of eyes peering at him from under a mass of shaggy hair.

The boy ran out, screaming, and his father and some neighbors came on the run. Roy insisted that there was a ghost under the house! The men called the sheriff to investigate. Creffield crawled from under the house where he had been hiding. His hair hung to his shoulders and long whiskers covered his face. He had

dug a trench which allowed him to stand upright beneath the house.

When the Hurt women learned that they were to be taken away, they carried a large supply of canned and other food to him which they hoped would last until they returned, but they had been gone for some time and the Prophet was hungry. He had grown pale and thin from the long dark confinement and lack of food. He was arrested and sentenced to serve two years in prison.

In the meantime, Maude had divorced him.

Upon good behavior, Creffield was released before he had served his full sentence. He immediately went into action. First he wrote a letter to Maude who was then living at the home of a brother and his wife in Seattle, asking her to remarry him. She replied that she would, providing he came to Seattle.

Then he sent letters to members of the organization, calling them to a meeting to be held in a small grove near Waldport. About fifty attended the meeting. He made the announcement that Esther Mitchell, an attractive young member, would be the "Second Mother." Then he built a fire and threw his clothing into the flames and ordered the members to do the same. Although they sobbed and cried, they obeyed and put on their Mother-Hubbard dresses.

When the home folks heard of this meeting, they were desparate. Angry men hurried to Waldport to bring their relatives home. Creffield was either warned of their coming or feared that they would, and he disappeared.

When George Mitchell learned that the "Prophet" had chosen his sister to become the "Mother of the Church" he decided that this fraud had to be stopped. He and another young man whose sister was also one of Creffield's followers, made an agreement to go out, hunting for him and that the first one who found him would kill him.

In some way the sisters learned of the plan and they made a pact that if either of the brothers did kill

Creffield, that ones sister would kill him.

In the meantime Creffield went to Seattle where he and Maude were remarried and were living in a roominghouse.

One day they walked down a street to a nearby store. Creffield went into the store to make a small purchase while Maude waited outside. It was there that George Mitchell saw the man he was looking for. He ran up, drew a gun, and shot Creffield in the head. He fell to the floor, dead.

Upon hearing the shot, Maude ran in screaming, declaring that he had killed a prophet, who was her husband, and that he would arise on the third day. Firmly believing that Creffield would rise, Maude protested the burial, but nevertheless, he was buried in Seattle. Maude was the only one present except those employed.

George Mitchell was arrested and placed in jail to await trial. When his brother heard what had happened, he hastened to Seattle to be with George.

A trial was held and the jury quickly acquitted George Mitchell. He and his brother went directly to the depot to take the train home.

Knowing that George would go to the depot immediately, his sister, Esther Mitchell, was waiting for him there. As he approached, she stepped from her place of concealment and shot him through the head in much the same way that Creffield had been shot. She was placed in an asylum where she remained for about a year and was then released to friends. Her health failed and she died a few months later.

Maude Hurt became despondent and committed suicide.

Thus ended the career of a man who had gained the confidence of sincere people through false pretenses. The result was broken homes, sorrow, and even death.

The "Holy Rollers" had become nationally known and had put Corvallis on the map, but at far too high a price.

CONCLUSION

Corvallis has grown by leaps and bounds. It is a completely new city. Almost all of the old landmarks are gone--the few that are left will soon follow the others.

As I drive about the town, in my mind, I brush away the modern structures and the old ones stand out clearly--"Old Corvallis" comes to life and I enjoy the vision.

I would not bring it back--it would have no place in the world of today. Nevertheless it was a very happy place to live.

Daniel Morgan, Reuben Kiger

Indians, peach trees, catfish

By Janine O'Neill
Of The Gazette-Times

At 83, Corvallis-born Minerva Kiger-Reynolds seems almost like a pioneer herself. But her roots in Corvallis history go clear back to 1850 — to her father, Reuben Kiger, for whom Kiger Island was named, and to her maternal grandmother, Mary Sylvester, who lost the Children's Farm Home land claim after she was left a widow with a week-old baby and three little children.

Mrs. Reynolds lives on another of Mrs. Sylvester's land claims at 4715 NE Highway 20, in a ranch house

fronting on Asbahr Slough, which she says should have been named for her family.

She has, in her own words, "a remarkable memory," a fact she documents by ticking off every business on Second Street Corvallis in 1900, when she was only seven years old. And what she doesn't know from her own experience she remembers being told by her father, who died in 1907, and by her mother, Minerva "Dolly" Morgan Sylvester Kiger, who died in 1928.

Mrs. Reynolds is the only living granddaughter of pioneer Daniel Morgan, who crossed the plains in 1847, only two

years after Corvallis founder J.C. Avery.

At Independence, Mo., the starting point of the Oregon Trail, Morgan's wife died, leaving him with three little children and a six-month-old baby. Shortly thereafter his wagon upset, injuring the baby so that it had to be hand-carried all the way to Oregon, where it finally died near Mt. Hood. In later years the three older children erected a monument to their mother and sibling there on the Old Oregon Trail, and Morgan family reunions still are held at the site.

Morgan was remarried to Mrs. Reynolds' grandmother and the couple began "proving up" on the farm home and adjacent land claims, each 160 acres. Settlers had to remain on their claims three years and make certain improvements before they got their deeds from the government.

In 1850, one week after Mrs. Reynolds' mother, Minerva "Dolly" Morgan, was born, Morgan "dropped dead," says Mrs. Reynolds. His distraught wife, saddled with his three youngsters and a newborn child, moved in with neighbors, and by the time she was ready to return to her home she had lost Morgan's farm home claim.

Eventually Mrs. Morgan, like her husband before her, remarried and her husband, John Sylvester, helped her prove up her own Century Farm Home claim where Mrs. Reynolds resides.

Although Mrs. Sylvester said that John Sylvester was "the finest man she ever knew," Mrs. Reynolds says her mother also told her the remarried widow used to weep as she polished the buttons on her first husband's uniform.

In 1850, the same year Minerva Morgan was born, the man who would become her husband joined a wagon train at Knoxville, Ill.

Reuben Kiger was only 12 years old, but when his parents first refused to let him make



Reuben Kiger: A love for fine horses



Minerva Kiger-Reynolds

"Mother didn't want to go..."

the trip Mrs. Reynolds says "he became so despondent they thought he was ill."

After working his way cross-country on the wagon train, young Kiger arrived in Corvallis in need of food and a place to sleep.

An old Negro cook at a restaurant where he stopped offered him a bed "if he didn't mind sleeping with a nigger."

"My father said it was the best bed he'd ever slept in," says Mrs. Reynolds. "Of course, he hadn't slept in a bed at all in six months."

The next morning, Kiger got a job at the restaurant, followed by a job at a livery stable which he later bought. Kiger loved fine horses all his life and

built his own racetrack and grandstand about one mile north of present-day Corvallis.

Kiger married Minerva Morgan in 1866 when she was 16 years old. In 1872, to forget the death of her firstborn, Mrs. Kiger consented to go with her husband to the Steens Mountains area of southeastern Oregon.

"Mother didn't want to go, but father promised her they could return whenever she wanted, so they went," says Mrs. Reynolds. "After the Modoc Indian War ended she wanted to come home and they did, but it broke father's heart."

The Kigers' lives in the Steens Mountains were like a

real life version of "The Young Pioneers" television drama.

While searching for feed to get his cattle through an unexpectedly long first winter, Kiger became the first white man to see Kiger Gorge. Indians roamed the gorge and after the Kigers' relocated there, Mrs. Kiger frequently found them standing silently in the cabin door when she looked up from her work.

When she was nine months pregnant with Mrs. Reynolds' older brother, Mrs. Kiger clung to the running gear of a wagon for 60 miles to escape from attacking Indians.

The boy that was born in Ft. Harney several weeks later "looked so terrible that at first mother thought he was abnormal," says Mrs. Reynolds.

Settlers who sneaked out of the fort to salvage a few possessions from their homesteads were killed by Indians and their heads stuck up on pikes. The Kigers' cabin was ransacked and in later years Mrs. Kiger saw an old squaw wearing a rose silk dress her husband had bought her in Nevada.

In 1878 the Modocs signed a treaty with the settlers, but Mrs. Reynolds says her mother "didn't trust them; didn't think they'd keep it." Kiger sold his cattle and claim to "cattle king" Pete French for \$80,000 and the couple returned to Corvallis.

Despite the loss of his rangeland, Kiger did not suffer

for holdings in Corvallis. During his lifetime he owned 1,400 acres near the Sylvesters' claim on Highway 20, Kiger Island, where he planted 3,000 peach trees and other fruit trees and a farm near Bellfountain.

Mrs. Reynolds missed the harrowing adventures of the Kigers' homesteading in Eastern Oregon, but she had adventures of her own in turn-of-the-century Corvallis.

She was alone at home the day an expressman left piles of gunnysacks full of catfish on the Kiger porch.

"When father came home he was furious," she recalls. "There was no sign of life in the catfish, but he dumped them in a bath tub, anyway. Hours later I went in and those fish were having a ball; they had all 'come to life' and there was water all over."

She remembers that her father spent all night distributing the fish in the river and sloughs, the first catfish in Benton County.

Mrs. Reynolds has published a small book about her parents' years in Kiger Gorge which is in the Corvallis Library. She also has written a manuscript about Corvallis in 1900, including a brief history of the period 1845 to 1900, and would like to see that published soon, too.

"I'm as old as Methuselah," she says, shifting her position in her antique-furnished livingroom, "and I feel it."